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Information Bulletin

Grade 6 Social Studies
1994-96

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

This bulletin contains general information about the Achievement Testing Program and information specific to the Grade 6 Social Studies Assessment. Additional copies of the bulletin may be made as needed.

DISTRIBUTION: Superintendents of Schools • School Principals and Teachers • The Alberta Teachers' Association • Alberta School Boards Association • Officials of Alberta Education • General Public upon Request.

October 1994

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General Information

The Achievement Testing Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special-needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*, which has been mailed to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts must be administered during the first week of June. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests must be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the test on the same day. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period, schools can ensure that most, if not all, absentees are tested. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

Beginning in 1995, the tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Français 6^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Français 9^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Students in French Language Programs

Beginning in June 1995, all students in Francophone and French Immersion programs must write the French form of the achievement tests. Alberta Education will send enrollment forms to schools by February requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-March.

Marking Achievement Tests Locally

Beginning in June 1995, teachers will be able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year-end assessment, as well as for planning instruction. Additional information regarding local marking of tests will be provided in December 1994.

Reporting the Results

Each school jurisdiction will receive a district report and school reports for their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staffs (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Individual student profiles will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We also expect that these reports will be shared with parents.

Provincial results will be made public in September. A detailed *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report* is published annually.

Broadened Assessment Initiatives

The Student Evaluation Branch has developed additional instruments to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests themselves can provide. These instruments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis:

Grade 3

- 1995 • "whole book" performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1996 • problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1997 • "whole book" performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1998 • problem-solving activities in mathematics

Grade 6

- 1995 • problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1996 • "whole book" performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1997 • problem-solving and decision-making activities in social studies
- 1998 • performance tasks in science

Grade 9

- 1995 • problem-solving and decision-making activities in social studies
- 1996 • problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1997 • performance tasks in science
- 1998 • performance tasks in language arts

Description of the Social Studies Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned social studies by the end of Grade 6. These standards reflect essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 6 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

These statements describe what is expected of students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work by the end of Grade 6. The statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured. By comparing actual results to expected provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is in fact “good enough.”

Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 6 Social Studies are expected to demonstrate a basic understanding of the concepts, generalizations, and skills fundamental to the social studies program.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* are expected to know that all people have similar physical, social, and psychological needs. They understand these concepts and are able to give examples of each. They know how individual and societal needs are met by local government; as well, they have a basic understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

These students are expected to independently understand, organize, analyze, synthesize, and apply social studies related ideas and concepts in simple and familiar situations. They should be able to apply their knowledge of basic concepts such as human needs, class structure, rights, responsibilities, local government, lobby groups, communication, technology, and sharing. Students who meet the *acceptable standard* are able to distinguish between fact and opinion, compare maps of different scales and compute distances, and organize information into charts and graphs. Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to use higher level thinking skills in familiar contexts.

The expectation is that these students will be successful with familiar tasks and be able to compare and contrast ways different societies meet basic needs. Also, they are expected to analyze and synthesize information to make inferences and draw conclusions about how traditions, customs, individuals, and government influence the way people meet their basic needs.

Standard of Excellence

It is expected that students meeting the *standard of excellence* in Grade 6 Social Studies have internalized most, if not all, of the concepts and generalizations fundamental to social studies. They are confident learners who demonstrate a clear and accurate understanding of how individual and societal needs are met in different societies. They are able to transfer their knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar situations.

Students achieving the *standard of excellence* are able to deal with complex details and ideas. They are able to organize and interpret a wide variety of information and abstract material to a limited degree. They are able to apply higher level thinking skills to unfamiliar contexts.

Grade 6 Social Studies Assessment

General Description

The assessment consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. The student is required to use a separate answer sheet.

The assessment is designed to be completed in 60 minutes. However, additional time of approximately 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Content

The test is based on three social studies topics.

Topic A:

Local Government

Topic B:

Greece: An Ancient Civilization

Topic C:

China: A Pacific Rim Nation

The topics are integrated within the 50 questions. For example, questions on *Topic A: Local Government* do not constitute the

first section. They are combined with concepts related to topics B and C, and appear throughout the test.

The knowledge component and process skills have equal emphasis on the test. Each question evaluates knowledge and/or skill objectives.

Neither participation skills nor attitude objectives are directly evaluated on this test. However, these skills contribute to students' ability to do the test.

The blueprint below shows the weighting and distribution for the multiple-choice questions.

Blueprint

		Topic A Local Government	Topic B Greece: An Ancient Civilization	Topic C China: A Pacific Rim Nation	Proportion of Score
Knowledge Objectives	Understands Generalizations, Concepts, Related Facts, and Content	18%	16%	16%	50%
Process Skill Objectives	Locating, Organizing, Interpreting Information	18%	16%	16%	50%
	Geography/Mapping				
	Analyzing, Synthesizing, Evaluating				
	Proportion of Score	36%	32%	32%	100%

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process whereby judgements about students' performance on the assessment are made in relation to provincial standards. For more information on confirming standards procedures, refer to

Appendix A of the *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*.

Sample Questions

Examples of multiple-choice questions are presented on the following pages. The examples illustrate the nature and complexity of the questions that will appear on the test. Background information for each question is provided. The *Key and Descriptors for Sample Questions* are on page 11. Each question is classified according to the topic on which it is based. In addition, the curriculum and assessment standards for each question are included.

Please note that these questions include examples of knowledge and skill questions for each of the three topics. The weightings assigned on the actual test are indicated in the blueprint on page 4.

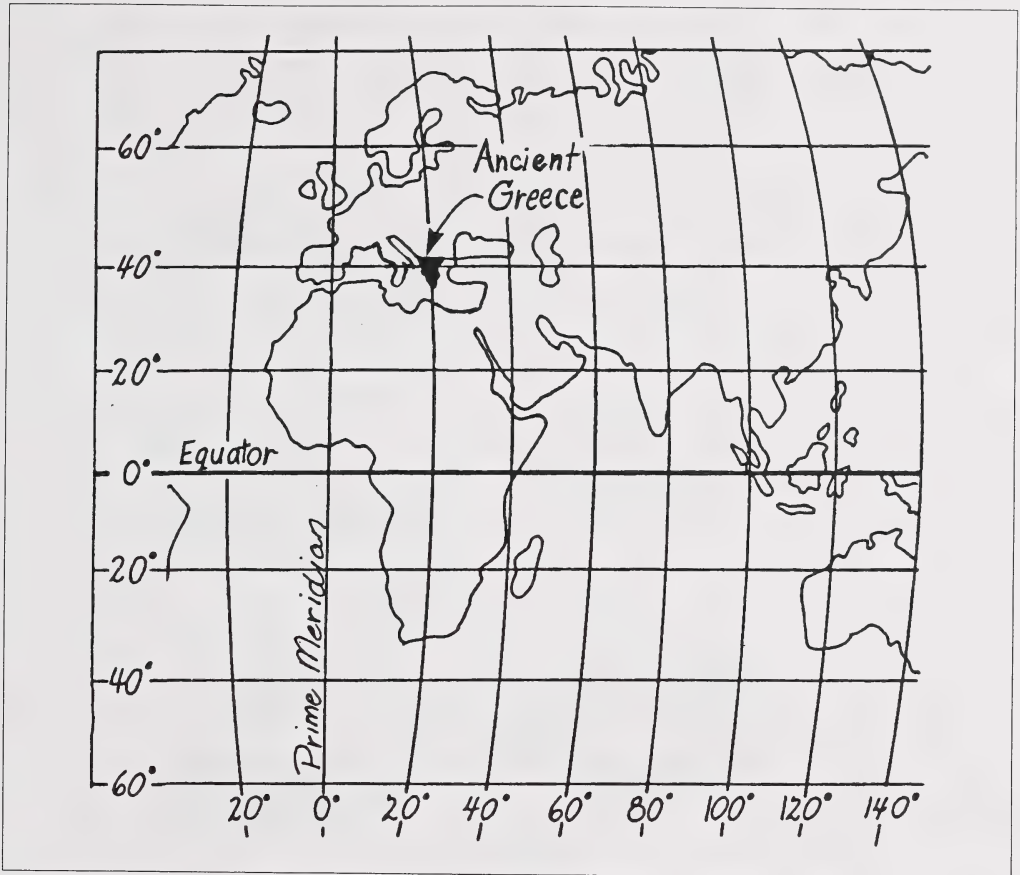
We encourage teachers to familiarize students with the types of questions that will appear on the achievement test by discussing these sample questions with them.

Use the following chart on sports to answer questions 1 to 3.

	Ancient Greece	China	Canada
Activity/Sport	the main event in the Ancient Olympics was the pentathlon (foot race, discus throwing, long jump, javelin, wrestling) 1	table tennis is a very popular sport 2	skating and skiing are very popular 3
Purpose	the Ancient Olympics were religious festivals held in honour of Zeus 4	youngsters participate in sports in the hope of making the national team 5	youngsters participate in sports for fitness and pleasure 6
Reward	the prize was a wreath of olive leaves 7	it is an honour to represent their country 8	a gold medal can lead to fame and fortune 9
Participation	citizens spent part of their day exercising and practising different sports 10	elite athletes are trained by foreign coaches 11	involvement in sports is personal 12





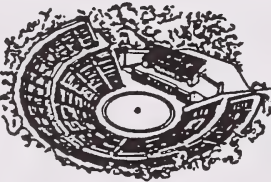



- In which box is there evidence to show that there is sharing among countries?
 - 3
 - 5
 - 9
 - 11
- Which box shows that Ancient Greek beliefs and ideas have affected western civilization?
 - 1
 - 3
 - 5
 - 10
- Which of the following statements best reflects a conclusion that could be drawn from the information in the chart?
 - Different societies have different attitudes towards sports and physical fitness.
 - All countries participate in the Olympic Games.
 - Hockey is Canada's national sport.
 - Recreation facilities play a major role in sports.

Study the map below and answer questions 4 and 5.



4. What is the **most likely** reason that Ancient Greeks wore the types of clothes that they did?
- A. Distance from the equator
 - B. Distance from the Prime Meridian
 - C. Flow of air over the mountains
 - D. Amount of precipitation
5. What is the approximate location of a village in Ancient Greece?
- A. 40°S latitude and 20°E longitude
 - B. 20°S longitude and 40°W latitude
 - C. 40°N latitude and 20°E longitude
 - D. 20°N longitude and 40°E latitude

Use the chart below to answer questions 6 and 7.

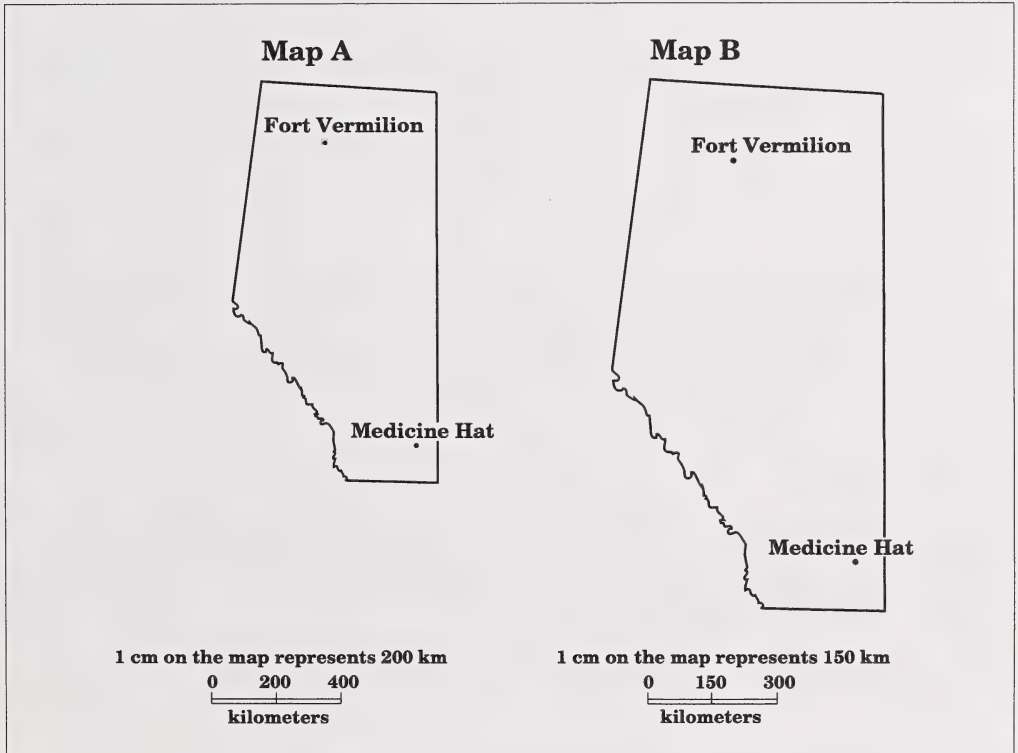
	Ancient Greece	Canada Today
A		
B		
C		
D		

6. Which row **incorrectly** compares how Ancient Greeks met a need with how Canadians today meet the same need?

- A. Row A
- B. Row B
- C. Row C
- D. Row D

7. Which row shows a psychological need being met for both Ancient Greeks and Canadians today?
- A. Row A
 - B. Row B
 - C. Row C
 - D. Row D

Use the following information to answer questions 8 and 9.



8. When the two maps are compared, the actual distance between Fort Vermilion and Medicine Hat is
- A. the same on map A and map B
 - B. three times as far on map B as map A
 - C. greater on map B than map A
 - D. twice as far on map A as map B

9. Which is the **correct** statement about using a scale on a map?

- A. The same scale is used on all maps.
- B. The scales on maps do not help to compute distance.
- C. Scales are always used to find distance in kilometers.
- D. Smaller scales are used for measuring larger distances.

Use the speakers' comments below to answer questions 10 and 11.

HENRY:

"The Spartan system of training young boys into soldiers from the age of seven was wrong. They lived under harsh conditions, and while their bravery was famous, the soldiers were ruled by fear. As part of their training, they had to steal their food. Young people must be allowed to plan their own lives."

SUSAN:

"It would be wise if the Canadian government were to have every person between the ages of 18 and 25 serve two years in the military. The results would be enormous; less unemployment, more disciplined young people, physically fit Canadians and a strong fighting force in case Canada has to go to war."

10. Susan feels that

- A. the Spartans had a good system of government
- B. Spartan boys should not have had to steal their food while training to be soldiers
- C. the Canadian government must become more like Ancient Greece
- D. military training has many benefits

11. The **main** issue being discussed is

- A. the need for required military training
- B. physical fitness in the armed forces
- C. young male Spartans lived in fear
- D. Canada's social needs are not being met

Key and Descriptors for Sample Questions

Ques.	Key	Topic	Component	Category*	Curriculum Standard	Assessment Standard**
1	D	C	Knowledge	C	understand the concept of sharing and identify examples	A
2	A	B	Knowledge	F	identify an influence of Ancient Greek civilization on western civilization	A
3	A	A, B, C	Process Skills	A	draw a conclusion about how people meet their needs in different societies	A
4	A	B	Knowledge	C	know how geography affects way of life	A
5	C	B	Process Skills	G/M	use the latitude-longitude grid system	A
6	A	A, B	Process Skills	L	compare information relating to human needs	A
7	C	A, B	Knowledge	C	know examples of psychological needs	A
8	A	A	Process Skills	G/M	use scale to calculate distance	A
9	D	A	Process Skills	G/M	interpret maps to discover relationships of scale	E
10	D	A, B	Process Skills	A	evaluate statements of opinion	A
11	A	A, B	Process Skills	A	synthesize information to select the best conclusion	E

*Category:

F—Facts

C—Concepts

G—Generalizations

L—Locating, Organizing, Interpreting Information

G/M—Geography/Mapping

A—Analyzing, Synthesizing, Evaluating

**Assessment Standard: A—Students meeting the acceptable standard should be able to correctly answer questions such as these

E—In addition to answering the questions identified for the acceptable standard, students meeting the standard of excellence should be able to correctly answer questions such as these

Preparing Students for the Assessment

We hope that teachers will share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Social Studies Achievement Test.

I strongly advocate preparing children to understand tests and testing through extensive class discussion about the makeup of the test and how to take it, and then adequate practice to find out their own particular weaknesses in approaching tests.

—Graves, p. 183

Have students do the sample questions included in this bulletin. Then have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

Suggestions for Answering Machine-Scorable Questions

The following suggestions are provided to help prepare students for the Grade 6 Social Studies machine-scorable questions.

Make sure you consider all forms of information provided. Information will be presented not only in words but in visual form such as cartoons, pictures, charts or maps. Consider all forms of information provided and think carefully about it before you try to answer any of the questions; or read the questions first and then consider all the information, keeping in mind the questions you need to answer.

When answering “best answer” questions, be sure to read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that you think is best. Some of the questions are designed to test your ability to make a judgement. These questions will always include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems such as **BEST**, **MOST STRONGLY**, or **MOST CLEARLY**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the information into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the information.

When answering questions, *choose the answer you think is best.* If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to you fairly quickly, you may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use your judgement to select an answer from those that remain.

Credit

Donald H. Graves, *Build a Literate Classroom* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1991), p. 183.

Alberta Education Contact

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